

COUNCIL

At a meeting of the Council on Wednesday, 11 February 2009 in the Council Chamber, Runcorn Town Hall

Present: Councillors Loftus (Chairman), Austin, Balmer, M. Bradshaw, Browne, P. Blackmore, J. Bradshaw, Bryant, D. Cargill, E. Cargill, Dennett, Drakeley, Fraser, Gerrard, Gilligan, Harris, Hignett, Hodgkinson, Horabin, Howard, D. Inch, Jones, Lloyd Jones, A. Lowe, J. Lowe, McDermott, McInerney, Morley, Murray, Nelson, Nolan, Norddahl, Osborne, Parker, Philbin, Polhill, Redhead, Rowan, Rowe, Shepherd, Stockton, Swain, Swift, Thompson, Wallace, Wharton, Worrall and Wright

Apologies for Absence: Councillors S. Blackmore, Edge, Higginson, Leadbetter, E. Ratcliffe, M. Ratcliffe and Wainwright

Absence declared on Council business: None

Officers present: L. Cairns, M. Reaney, C. Halpin, D. Johnson, I. Leivesley, G. Meehan, D. Parr, M. Simpson, D. Tregaea and J. Whittaker

Also in attendance: 2 members of public.

Action

COU66 COUNCIL MINUTES

The minutes of the Council meeting held on 17th December 2008, having been printed and circulated, were taken as read and signed as a correct record, subject to one amendment that it be recorded that there was one additional member of the public present at the previous Council meeting.

COU67 THE MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

It was reported that there were no Mayor's announcements.

COU68 LEADER'S REPORT

The Leader reported on the following issues:-

- The current economic climate was having an effect on the Borough in that three plants at Ineos Chlor had closed down. However, local authorities had always

performed at the time of crisis and £1.5m of Working Neighbourhood Funds had been provided in order to produce 100 apprenticeships which would have a positive impact on the Borough when the economy came out of the recession;

- Reference was made to a leaflet claiming that there were intentions to toll the Silver Jubilee Bridge regardless of whether the Mersey Gateway was built. The Leader confirmed that this was not the case.
- 3MG was progressing positively despite the economic downturn, which was a sign of a commitment to the future;
- Riverside College had recently published an Ofsted report, which had caused concerns. It was noted that the relevant agencies were currently working to address the issues. Members were referred to Minute EXB79 which noted that Halton Borough Council would discharge its future statutory responsibilities for planning and commissioning for 16 to 18 years in April 2010, for learning. This was part of the transfer of responsibilities from the Learning and Skills Council;
- There had been suggestions for a direct election for two Police Authorities. It was noted that this idea had now been dropped by the Government and a review had been taken with the outcome that people elected councillors, not for specific expertise but as people they trust and know in order to look after their interests including political ones; and
- As from April 2009 Cheshire County Council would be disbanded to form two new local authorities named Cheshire West and Cheshire East. The two new unitaries and Warrington were setting up a successor association and Halton would remain associate members of it.

COU69 MINUTES OF THE EXECUTIVE BOARD

The Council considered the minutes of the Executive Board from meetings held on 4th December, 18th December 2008 and 15th January 2009.

RESOLVED: That the minutes be received.

COU70 MINUTES OF THE EXECUTIVE BOARD SUB-COMMITTEE

The Council considered the minutes of the Executive Board Sub-Committee from meetings held on 4th December, 18th December, 23rd December 2008 and 15th January 2009.

RESOLVED: That the minutes be received.

COU71 QUESTIONS ASKED UNDER STANDING ORDER NO. 8

Councillor Inch asked the following question in accordance with Standing Order No. 8:

“Has there been a formal resolution of either the Executive Board of the Council, authorising the Council Leader to sign up to the Liverpool City Region Multi Area Agreement? If so when?”

In response it was advised that the MAA established an arrangement for joint working to deliver better outcomes for Halton and the City Region and economies of scale delivering better value for money. It did not cede any powers from Halton. It is not a formal contract, does not bear the signature of the Council’s Solicitor or the Council’s Seal and as such did not require specific authorisation before its completion.

(NB:The following declared personal interest in the following item due to being school Governors in the Borough: Browne, E Cargill, D Cargill, Dennett, Gerrard, Hignett, Hodgkinson, Horabin, Jones, Lloyd Jones, Loftus, A Lowe, J. Lowe, McInerney, Nelson, Norddahl, Philhin, Rowan, Stockton, Swain, Thompson, Wallace and Wright)

(Councillor Wharton declared a personal interest in the following item as his son attends Fairfield High School.)

COU72 CAPITAL PROGRAMME - 2009/2010 - EXECUTIVE BOARD 29TH JANUARY 2009 - KEY DECISION

The Executive Board had considered a report of the Strategic Director – Children and Young People which provided a summary of the funding available for the Schools Capital Programme 2009/10. In addition, the report outlined the Access Initiative Funding for 2009/10, the Early Years Children’s Centre Capital and Childcare Capital 2009/10, Playbuilder Capital, Primary Capital, Diploma Exemplar Funding and Youth Capital Fund and Youth Capital Fund

Plus.

RESOLVED: That the Capital Funding allocation detailed in paragraph 3.1 of the report for 2009/10 be approved.

COU73 CALENDAR OF MEETINGS 2009-2010 - EXECUTIVE BOARD 29TH JANUARY 2009

Members considered the calendar of meetings for 2009-2010. It was noted that on occasion Policy and Performance Board meetings did not align with performance monitoring reports. It was reported that as there were 5 PPB's a year it was difficult to accommodate this, however Members were advised that the information was made available immediately and discussions could be held at any time with the discretion of the Chair by way of Special meetings.

RESOLVED: That the Calendar of Meetings for the 2009-2010 Municipal Year, attached in Appendix 1 to the report, be approved.

COU74 MERSEY GATEWAY: FUNDING FOR ADVANCED LAND ACQUISITION - MERSEY GATEWAY EXECUTIVE BOARD 29TH JANUARY 2009

The Mersey Gateway Executive Board had considered a report of the Strategic Director – Environment which provided an update of the information reported to the Mersey Gateway Executive Board on 15th November 2007 in relation to funding required to support the acquisition of land, including the interests of tenants and freeholders prior to receiving Government Grant.

It was advised that there was a funding gap and options to manage this for land acquisition had been assessed in some detail.

In relation to where funds would come from to cover the costs, a number of avenues were being explored. It was reported that a number of factors depended on the date and outcome of the planning inquiry which was to be announced in the near future.

The Council was advised that it was a good time to invest in land and borrowing money in terms of interest rates etc.

RESOLVED: That the Capital Programme be amended as outlined in the report.

COU75 LOCAL CODE OF CORPORATE GOVERNANCE

The Council considered a report of the Strategic Director – Corporate and Policy. It was noted that CIPFA and SOLACE (the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives and Senior Managers) had published an updated governance framework for local authorities – “Delivering Good Governance in Local Government”. This draft Local Code of Corporate Governance had been developed in response to that publication.

In relation to page 42 paragraph 4.2 Members discussed the function of effective scrutiny arrangements.

RESOLVED: That the draft Local Code of Corporate Governance be approved and included in the Constitution.

COU76 PROCEDURE FOR APPROVING LOCAL AREA AGREEMENTS

The Council received a report of the Strategic Director – Corporate and Policy in which it was advised that the current Local Area Agreement (LAA) was approved in June 2008 covering the period April 2008 to March 2011. It was noted it would be reviewed and refreshed annually. It was advised that the LAA draft version went to all Boards and Members for scrutiny before it was submitted.

RESOLVED: That

(1) the approval of Local Area Agreements for Halton be delegated to the Executive Board; and

(2) the Constitution be amended accordingly.

COU77 MINUTES OF THE POLICY AND PERFORMANCE BOARDS AND THE BUSINESS EFFICIENCY BOARD

The Council considered the reports on the work of the following Boards in the period since the meeting of the Council on 17th December 2008:-

Children and Young People
Employment, Learning and Skills

Healthy Halton
Safer Halton
Urban Renewal
Corporate Services
Business Efficiency Board

In receiving the minutes the Chair of the Children and Young People Policy and Performance Board brought to attention the good work of the Joint Working Oral Health Group, in terms of the good practice and scrutiny and it was noted that all children in the Borough had received free toothbrushes and toothpaste as a result.

COU78 COMMITTEE MINUTES

The Council considered the reports on the works of the following Committees in the period since the meeting of the Council on 17th December 2008:-

Development Control
Standards
Regulatory

COU79 MOTION SO6 - "PROVISION OF INFORMATION TO COUNCILLORS"

The following motion was moved and seconded by Redhead and Hodgkinson respectively:

"Elected Members should be informed of all important decision or events involving the Council no later than the time when the information is released to the press."

The Motion related to the signing of the Liverpool City Region Multi Area Agreement. The local press received a briefing on this event in time to meet their deadline the following Thursday. It was felt that if Members had been advised in advance of this it would have prepared them better to inform the public.

Council was advised that the Leader had not been involved in the signing of the agreement, if this had been the case all Members would have been informed in advance. It was reported that the Council did not have any control over the Daily Post and Echo in terms of what they publish.

After discussion, Council agreed move the proposed Motion.

RESOLVED: That the Motion be agreed.

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Meeting ended at 7.20 p.m.